

Business Outlook

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*Albuquerque,
New Mexico*

SBA hearing is Feb. 25

Journal Staff Report

Small-business owners with concerns about fair enforcement of federal rules can comment at a U.S. Small Business Administration Regulatory Fairness Board Hearing in Albuquerque on Feb. 25.

The hearing will be from 1-4 p.m. at the Wells Fargo Bank at 200 Lomas NE.

SBA National Ombudsman Michael Barrera will conduct the hearing.

"Small businesses want and deserve a fair federal regulatory enforcement process," said Barrera in a news release. "They want a common-sense approach to problem-solving, and a strong voice in the regulatory process."

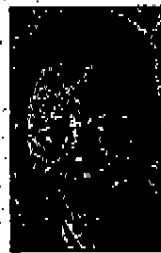
The SBA, through the

national ombudsman, works directly with 28 federal regulatory agencies to resolve complaints.

Congress created the Office of the National Ombudsman in 1996 with the passage of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act.

The act established 10 regional fairness boards.

Taos Mayor Frederick Peralta is the New Mexico member of the National Fairness Board and also is a member of the Region VI board which includes New Mexico, Arkansas, Louisiana,



BARRERA:
The SBA
national
ombudsman

Oklahoma and Texas.

Using in part information gathered at the hearings, the ombudsman reports annually to Congress on the regulatory environment and its effect upon small businesses.

Officials from federal regulatory agencies will be available to answer questions and describe their agencies' steps to comply with the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act.

Anyone interested in testifying at the hearing can contact the Office of the National Ombudsman at (202) 205-2417, or Anthony McMahon, the SBA's district director in Albuquerque, at (505) 346-6767 or -6759.

For more information, visit the SBA's Web site at www.sba.gov/ombudsman.

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Feds to hear business complaints about rules

By Dan Mayfield
Tribune Reporter

Albuquerque, NM

Albuquerque Tribune
2/11/2002

Small businesses tend to suffer in silence when it comes to federal regulations they believe are unfair.

When Neil Hise of Cemco Inc., a manufacturer of rock crushers, enters mines, he has to be certified by the Mine Safety and Health Administration.

"Up until 2001, it wasn't a big deal. You'd go to the office and they give you some basic training: Stay away from the big trucks, they'll squash you," he says.

But this year it all changed. Now, he says, anybody entering a mine must have taken a 24-hour training course administered by the mine safety administration.

"I have to be trained in CPR, mining and all, just to be a salesman," he says. "Where did the common sense go?"

Now, local small businesses with beefs that federal regulations don't make sense or are unfair can talk to the Small Business Administration's ombudsman, who is charged with figuring out where the regulations went wrong and fixing them.

On Feb. 25, the national small business and agriculture regulatory enforcement ombudsman will be in Albuquerque with key officials from various federal departments to hear concerns from small companies. Michael Barrera's job is to coordinate with federal agencies to solve small business and agricultural problems.

"It's meant to deal with regulatory issues, enforcement issues. His authority, which is quasi-judicial, is to hold hearings and listen to businesses," says Anthony McMahon, New Mexico Small Business Administration director.

It's a mechanism for the small business community to get all the acronyms - EPA, OSHA, IRS, IMSHA, DOL, FCC and more - in one room.

Small businesses can give oral or written testimony at the hearing that Barrera later compiles into a report for Congress. Some regulations need to be changed with a federal law while others can be worked out internally in specific agencies, McMahon says.

The SBA won't know there's a problem if it doesn't hear from the community, he says.

"The biggest complaint I hear about the FCC is that in New Mexico, we're so far from Washington. It seems like an overwhelming problem," says Marianne Granoff, chairwoman of the New Mexico Internet Professionals Association.

Granoff runs an e-mail list that local Internet professionals use to vent their concerns about the Federal Communications Commission.

"I've written to them, and I've sent letters on behalf of NMIPA and never heard anything back," she says.

Granoff says she's prepared to attend and give Barrera testimony about the problems local Internet providers have.

McMahon says the health care industry is another that he's heard complaints from. Small home-health-care providers have to follow the same Medicare and Medicaid rules large hospitals do. But they don't have the time or the staff to keep up with the mountains of paperwork.

The testimony, McMahon says, can be confidential if a business feels uncomfortable speaking out. Written testimony can also be presented at the hearing.

"Small businesses don't have a way to challenge laws. This ombudsman is here to give them a voice," McMahon says.

<http://www.abqtrib.com/print/index.cfm>

To sign up to give testimony, call the Albuquerque SBA office at 346-7909. The hearing will be at the Wells Fargo building at 200 Lomas Blvd. N.E. on Monday, Feb. 25, from 1 to 4 p.m.

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